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9 August 1989

Comments on my August 1960 paper, Strategic Objectives and Command Control Problems, Rand D-7838

--Note: This was written during my and RAND's "missile gap" concern; though it was about the time that Andy Marshall had begun to hint to me and a few others (including an advisory group for Kennedy's campaign) that "there might be no missile gap after all." (He could give us no reasons for this prediction, which ran totally counter to the assumptions of RAND and USAF studies).

--This was written after my work for CINCPAC and my reading of the war plans--including, I presume, the JSCP, though I'm not certain of that at this moment. Yet the definition of "general war" on p. 14--"the all-out struggle to the finish between the United States and the USSR"--reflects the general understanding of that term, not the highly secret definition in the JSCP: "armed conflict between the US and the USSR," which deliberately excluded the notion of limited war with the Soviet Union or any strategy in such a conflict other than the immediate execution of what came to be called the SIOP. (I may simply have been keeping the secret--especially in this unclassified D--of this latter definition, which it was my goal to bring to the attention of the Secretary of Defense and the President).

--p. 19. The JSCP and SIOP-62 that ruled at the outset of the Kennedy Administration were indeed designed to operate "on the principle of the mousetrap; given certain preselected triggering signals, a predetermined, inexorable response would follow fast and automatically (without "feedback control")."

This mousetrap was designed and expected to kill promptly some 600 million people.

Perhaps more than I appreciated at the time, this design may have reflected a tacit understanding by the JCS and SAC Commanders of the vulnerability of command centers and communications, and thus the near-impossibility of either centralized or decentralized post-attack control.

Another factor that I didn't fully recognize at the time was the degree to which General LeMay and his disciples felt post-attack control was unnecessary, in view of their belief that a single target system was optimal under all circumstances, both for deterrence, retaliation and war-fighting.

That is, it was not till I saw the continuous lineage of the 1959-60 plans from the World War II attacks on Japan through the nuclear plans of the late '40's (before there was any threat of Soviet nuclear attack) and the early '50's, when the threat of Soviet attack was still minimal, that I fully realized that, to

LeMay, Soviet cities were suitable and critical first-strike targets.

Moreover, they were suitable "prompt" targets for the first wave of attack, along with Soviet nuclear bases and other military targets. The desirability of attacking them immediately was reinforced by the above consideration, that any Soviet retaliation at all was likely to eliminate US command and control. Third, any delay in attacking them could tempt a US President, if he were still alive, to decide against attacking them at all: eliminating what LeMay saw as a crucial part of a war-winning strategy. Fourth, Moscow in particular was the center of the Soviet command and control system, which LeMay sought to destroy at the outset.

Preserving Soviet command and control in hopes of bringing about an end of the war--without full expenditure of Soviet forces--held no advantages to the JCS or SAC, in their knowledge--not shared with RAND or me (or the President)--that Soviet forces were so small even before US attack, and so vulnerable, that this "coercive option" which I prescribed in my draft guidelines in 1961 was not a compelling strategy for dealing with any Soviet residual forces. (My coercive strategy presumed that fairly large, relatively invulnerable Soviet forces were to be expected to survive the first nuclear exchange; this was the implication of official CIA/USAF intelligence estimates).

Thus the only military objective in general war (in the usual, non-JSCP sense) was to destroy as promptly as possible a fixed target system, which played the role, in effect, of the mouse. LeMay was the exterminator of the mouse,